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ABSTRACT

Ten years of research on developmental models of supervision in counseling generally support the premises of the models. Nevertheless, very little is known about the conduct of effective supervision. Future research needs to explore the relationship between supervision, trainee outcomes, and trainee type. Supervision should adopt a pragmatic agenda, more directly investigating the relevance of developmental models to the actual practice of supervision. These studies would have the potential for guiding daily interactions with supervisees. Researchers should implement "moratoriums" on three types of research: (1) model-building; (2) self-reports of satisfaction and self-reports of perception of supervision events; and (3) academic settings. Researchers should directly measure actual supervision events, conduct collaborative studies with field supervisors, and work toward a "technology" of developmental supervision interventions. A pragmatic focus does not imply that theoretical questions are unimportant. However, after 10 years of theoretical discussion and empirical reports, little has been contributed to day-to-day supervision activity. Investigations of what actually happens during supervision and of what works with particular supervisors and supervisees can give relevance to developmental models of supervision and enhance the practice of supervision. (ABL)

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A Pragmatic Research Agenda for Investigating Developmental Models of Supervision

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Running head: PRAGMATIC RESEARCH

Paper presented in J. M. Littrell (Chair), Critical directions for supervision research. Symposium conducted at the meeting of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, St. Louis, Missouri, October 1988.

Abstract

Ten years of research on developmental models of supervision generally support the premises of the models. Nevertheless, we know little about the conduct of effective supervision. The critical issue for future research, then, is to determine "...what types of supervision techniques will result in what types of trainee outcomes for which type of trainee" (Holloway & Hosford, 1983, p. 75). A pragmatic research agenda is proposed, and three "moratoriums" for future research are discussed: 1) a moratorium on model-building, 2) a moratorium on self-reports of satisfaction and self-reports of perceptions of supervision events, and 3) a moratorium on academic settings. Researchers are encouraged to directly measure actual supervision events, conduct collaborative studies with field supervisors, and work toward a "technology" of developmental supervision interventions. Examples of current studies illustrating work in these directions are cited.

A Pragmatic Research Agenda for Investigating Developmental Models of Supervision

For almost ten years, most supervision research has been based on developmental models of counselor growth (e.g., Blocher, 1983; Littrell, Lee-Borden, & Lorenz, 1979; Loganbill, Hardy, & Delworth; Stoltenberg, 1981). In a recent review of this research, Worthington (1987) concluded there is "limited but reasonably congruent support" (p. 201) for the general tenets of the models. As theorized, supervisees progress through sequential, hierarchial stages as they acquire more advanced conceptual and behavioral counseling skills, become more insightful about themselves and their clients, and move from dependence to independence to interdependence in the supervisory relationship. In addition, supervisors vary their behaviors based on the developmental level of the counselor, functioning as teacher and/or counselor at beginning levels but serving more as a collaborator/consultant for advanced counselors.

The research on developmental models has not escaped criticism. Recent reviewers (Borders, 1986; Ellis, Landany, Krengel, & Schult, 1988; Holloway, 1987; Russell, Crimmings, & Lent, 1984; Worthington, 1987) have pointed to methodological limitations and listed numerous unanswered questions. They found methodological flaws in the statistical procedures, instruments, and samples in reported studies. The reviewers suggested future researchers consider longitudinal designs, include control groups, collect pretest and followup data, and use multiple methods of data collection.

The reviewers also agreed that many essential details in the supervision models are still to be identified. Basic, unanswered questions include the following:

1. How does the supervisor assess developmental level?
2. What supervision interventions are effective at each developmental level? Which promote movement from one stage to the next?
3. What individual traits of the supervisee (e.g., conceptual and ego level, learning style, etc.) facilitate or impede progress?
4. How do characteristics of the supervisor (e.g., counseling and supervision theoretical orientations, gender, personality traits, etc.) affect the supervisory relationship? the conduct of supervision? the outcomes of supervision? Which characteristics are important or relevant?
5. How does the interaction of supervisors' and supervisees' personality characteristics influence the conduct and outcomes of supervision?
6. What counseling skills are being developed at advanced levels?
7. What are the goals or desired outcomes of supervision?
8. Exactly what is a "master counselor"?

In addition to these criticisms, concepts of the supervision models themselves have been questioned. The models are based in more general developmental theories, including the psychosocial theories of Chickering (1969), Erikson (1968), and Mahler (1979), and the cognitive-developmental

theories of Harvey, Hunt, and Schroeder (1961), Kohlberg (1969), Loevinger (1976), Perry (1970), and Piaget and Inhelder (1969). In a thorough critique, Holloway (1987) cited several inconsistencies between the models and the assumptions and principles underlying general developmental theories. A central point in her critique, and in subsequent rejoinders (Holloway, 1988; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1988), is whether conceptual level is a both a global variable and a content-specific construct. Holloway (1987) believes authors of developmental models wrongly assume counselor training and supervision trigger a "developmental regression on an organismic construct" (p. 210). At issue is how and to what extent students' general developmental levels (e.g., conceptual and ego) influence their progress through the stages of counselor development. While a few supervision studies have addressed this issue (e.g., Borders, 1988; Borders, Fong, & Neimeyer, 1986), the theoretical debate likely will continue.

In addition, the utility and "researchability" of supervision models may be jeopardized by their complexity and elaborate descriptions (Borders, in press; Holloway, 1987). Indeed, Holloway (1987) proposed alternative, more parsimonious paradigms (e.g., task mastery) that may explain the results of supervision research.

Nevertheless, the intuitive appeal of developmental models of supervision is based on their relevance to our day-to-day interactions with supervisees, and on our clinical observations of counselor development. The proliferation of studies in the past ten years indicates the models will continue to be a focus of supervision research. As a matter of fact, publication of the models brought long-overdue attention to the supervision process, differentiating between supervision and counseling and helping to establish supervision as a speciality in its own right.

Despite the problems with previous research, then, developmental models of supervision provide a useful framework for studies of this pivotal, educational experience. Thus, our task is to identify critical directions for future research on the models, while we continue to clarify their conceptual heritage.

A Pragmatic Research Agenda

What, then, are the critical questions that need to be addressed in future research? Recent reviewers have listed numerous unanswered questions that require attention (see above). But perhaps the central issue is the same one that was identified by Holloway and Hosford in 1983: "...what types of supervision techniques will result in what types of trainee outcomes for which type of trainee" (p. 75)?

In their critique of supervision research, the authors called for a systematic research program that would develop and test a "prescriptive model" of counseling supervision. They outlined three phases of such a research program: a) descriptive observation, b) experimental studies of critical variables identified in descriptive research, and c) construction of theory based on the results from the previous phases. Early supervision theories that

equated counseling and supervision lacked an empirical foundation in descriptive and experimental studies (Holloway & Hosford, 1983). Developmental models of supervision offered a new start, an opportunity to systematically develop and test a prescriptive model of supervision.

Research on developmental models, however, has not followed this systematic approach. As a result, we still have not determined "...what types of supervision techniques will result in what types of trainee outcomes for which type of trainee" (Holloway & Hosford, 1983, p. 75). Thus, the "critical direction" I propose for supervision research is the adoption of a pragmatic agenda. With this focus, researchers would more directly investigate the relevance of developmental models to the actual practice of supervision. More specifically, we would turn our attention to designing studies that have the potential for guiding our daily, even moment-to-moment, interactions with supervisees.

Adoption of a pragmatic agenda would have several implications for the conduct of supervision research. At least three "moratoriums" would be declared. Following is a discussion of these supposed moratoriums, which are based in part on suggestions of reviewers previously cited. The three topics were selected for discussion because they reflect the needs of supervision practitioners.

A Moratorium on Model-Building

First, a pragmatic research agenda would necessitate a moratorium on "new and/or improved" developmental models of supervision. Goodyear (1988) recently estimated that there are 25 developmental models in existence, up from the 18 counted by Worthington in 1984. Existing models have been expanded (e.g., Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987) and new ones have been proposed (e.g., Johnson & Moses, 1988). In contrast to Holloway and Hosford's (1983) proposal for a systematic research program, these models have been presented with little supportive empirical support.

With a moratorium on model-building, energy could be devoted to creating a "technology" of developmental supervision interventions. "Technical manuals" would 1) specify target skills and supervision outcomes, 2) outline the steps of a particular supervision approach designed to promote those outcomes, and 3) provide methods for evaluating the premises of the model. With such specificity, supervision approaches could be implemented by a variety of supervisors, with a variety of supervisees, in descriptive and experimental studies of developmental models.

Carey's (1988) recent cognitive-developmental model has the potential for providing such an intervention technology. Like the other models, Carey's is based in general developmental theories. But rather than describe counselor development, this model matches prescribed tactics with specified goals. To do this, Carey focuses on the statements of supervisors and supervisees. These statements are categorized along three dimensions: 1) cognitive-developmental level (elemental, situational, pattern, transformational); 2) modality (affect, behavior, cognitive), and 3) target (client, counselor, client-counselor, and

counselor-supervisor). The goal of supervision is to make supervisees aware of all modalities and targets, and to help them discuss these components at higher cognitive-developmental levels (i.e., transformational). In his "technical manual," Carey outlines how a supervisor assesses a particular supervisee and then makes intentional plans for working with that supervisee. With the further work planned by Carey, this model will lend itself well to descriptive and experimental intervention studies and pragmatic research questions.

A Moratorium on Self-Reports

A pragamatic research program would require a second moratorium on the use of two types of dependent measures: 1) self-reports of satisfaction with supervision, and 2) self-reports of participants' perceptions of supervision events. Instead, researchers would directly measure counselor development and report what actually happened during supervision sessions.

Self-reports of satisfaction. First, self-reports of satisfacation with supervision may provide data that has limited meaning for the actual practice of supervision. Most supervisors probably would agree that "just because something is good for a trainee does not mean that the trainee will be in favor of it" (Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987, p. 85) or report satisfaction with it. In addition, developmental models clearly indicate the supervisor is to take a proactive role, assuming responsibility for prompting and guiding counselor growth (Borders, 1986). In the Loganbill et al. (1982) model, for example, the supervisor determines which of the supervisee's developmental issues need to be moved from stage one to two or from stage two to three, and which issues are to be left at the current stage. Intervention strategies are based on this assessment and a prioritizing of needs. Confrontive interventions are "very powerful" strategies for promoting supervisee growth (Loganbill et al., 1982, p. 33), but may not be very comfortable for the supervisee (or supervisor).

Satisfaction measures seem particularly problematic for investigating supervision at intermediate levels of development, a period of instability and confusion. Supervisees at these stages alternatively feel confident and incompetent, and experience wide fluctuations in motivation and commitment. Their internal conflict often is expressed in overt discord with their supervisors. Neither of the participants, then, would be likely to report high levels of satisfaction with supervision, regardless how effective the supervision was or how much progress the supervisee made.

Self-reports of perceptions. Second, self-reports of participants' perceptions of supervision events may not accurately reflect what actually happens during sessions. Single case designs provide an appropriate methodology for assessing actual supervision events (Tracey, 1983). This approach has been employed in a few exemplary descriptive studies (e.g., Doehrman, 1976; Martin, Goodyear, & Newton, 1987) and experimental studies (e.g., Holahan & Galassi, 1986; Kopala & Baker, 1988).

Progress in this line of inquiry, however, is limited by the ambiguity of the goals of developmental supervision. Most developmental models (e.g., Loganbill et al., 1982; Stoltenberg, 1981; Stoltenberg & Delworth, 1987) tend

to describe counselor growth in general and conceptual terms rather than specific and operational goal statements. Growth in conceptual and ego development are Blocher's (1983) specified outcomes. These variables, however, are measured by semi-projective instruments that require extensive time and training to score. Desired outcomes of supervision, then, must be clarified before appropriate dependent measures can be constructed.

Recent studies describing supervisee behavior during counseling are relevant to this issue. Taken together, the results of these studies are beginning to detail incremental changes that are only globally described in the developmental models. Tracey and his associates (Tracey, Hays, Malone, & Herman, 1988; Herman & Tracey, 1988), for example, conducted analogue studies of changes in counselors' reponse usage and response flexibility as a function of experience. Hill, Charles, and Reed (1981) reported what may be the only longitudinal study of changes in counseling skills. Other researchers investigated novice and experienced counselors' cognitive processing during counseling (e.g., Borders, 1988; Borders, Fong, & Cron, 1988; Hill & O'Grady, 1985; Ricki & Peterson, 1988). Continued research of this type will help specify the desired outcomes of supervision - the behaviors and cognitions counselors need to develop, and the variables that need to be measured when investigating the developmental models. Client outcomes - the ultimate measure of counselor development - also need consideration (Holloway, 1984).

A Moratorium on Academic Settings

A third moratorium on supervision research in the academic setting might be too rash, but researchers must give some attention to the supervision being conducted in the field. For most counseling students, especially those in master's programs, a large percentage of supervision is provided by an on-site person. The qualifications of the on-site supervisor and the desirability of this practice have been addressed elsewhere (e.g., Hart & Falvey, 1987; Hess & Hess, 1983; Holloway, 1982); those are not the issues here. Instead, the realities of field supervision should be both recognized and utilized.

Collaborative research projects with field supervisors, for example, have much potential for contributing to our knowledge of counselor development. Most supervision research has focused on beginning skills students learn before they go to their field practica or internships. To understand additional developmental levels, then, supervisees' experiences in their field settings must be studied. At the least, collaborative projects would inform us of what is and is not happening during on-site supervision. Holloway (personal communication, September 9, 1988) is currently analyzing data collected in the field. Hopefully, her results will suggest further research questions and stimulate other investigators to look at supervision beyond the confines of academe.

Similarly, attention needs to be given to the post-degree counselor. Recent research has suggested that supervised counseling experience, but not unsupervised experience, facilitates counselor development (e.g., Wiley & Ray, 1986). What counseling supervision is provided in the schools, agencies, and higher education offices that employ our graduates? What happens to those

counselors who do not receive regular counseling supervision on the job? Does their development stop? These are additional pragmatic research questions that need to be addressed.

Conclusion

In calling for a pragmatic focus in supervison research, I do not mean to imply that more theoretical questions are unimportant. Indeed, the research questions I have identified are based in the concepts of the models, and I enjoy/value a philosophical debate as much as any academician. I also am aware (from personal experience) of the complications such a pragamatic agenda would introduce to the research process. Studies such as those I have proposed are more difficult to conduct, and they compound threats to internal and external validity. Problems include gaining access to field supervisors and practicing counselors, controlling supervision input, and using "noisy" and time-consuming measures of actual supervision events. These realities cannot be ignored.

After ten years of theoretical discussion and empirical reports, however, we seem to have contributed little to our day-to-day supervision activity. We know little more about what we actually are doing, what we need to do, or what we are trying to accomplish in a supervision session. These are the pragmatic issues that can provide an agenda for future supervision research, and, eventually, directly influence our behavior and effectiveness as supervisors.

This overview is not meant to be a comprehensive report of research on developmental models of supervision, nor an exhaustive list of the pragmatic questions that need to be addressed. Instead, I have identified three important areas that I believe need the attention of researchers, and have cited some promising work that is currently underway. The press for a pragmatic research agenda is meant to give a meaningful focus to future studies. Investigations of what actually happens during supervision and of what works for particular supervisors with particular supervisees, wherever the supervision takes place, can give relevance to developmental models of supervision and enhance the practice of supervision.

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